

APPROVED MINUTES

**ISDB Committee -- August 16, 2005
Boise, JR Wms West Conference Room
9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.**

Committee members in attendance: Karen McGee, Hal Bunderson, Cyndi Hippler.

Absent: Laird Stone, Milford Terrell, Michael Graham, Mike Sturmak, Wendy Jaquet, Mert Burns, and Mary Whitaker.

Karen McGee chaired the meeting.

The Committee reviewed the minutes of the July 21 meeting, and accepted them as written.

Presentation - Student Panel:

Karen welcomed a panel of three former ISDB students, who first presented a brief overview of their education process, then answered questions.

Jennifer Z. shared her experience in the Boise School District. She had a very good educational experience and, with the help of teachers, was able to take many of the classes she wanted.

Ms. Diaz was born hearing and then lost her hearing at an early age. Her parents met with a consultant from ISDB and eventually the family moved to Hagerman to be nearer to Gooding so she could attend ISDB, but not as a resident. She also took classes at Gooding High School. She participated in sports, etc. After she graduated, she went to Utah State and then to the College of Southern Idaho.

Ruth Ann Spooner was born deaf into a hearing family, who also moved so she could go to ISDB. She attended both public school and ISDB, and felt she had the best of both worlds – the social of ISDB, and extra-curricular in public schools. She is in college, playing sports, and majoring in writing.

Senator Hal Bunderson asked the panel that when they were contacted by ISDB originally, what did ISDB tell them their options were.

Ruth Ann told the Committee she was only 2, but her parents told her they had a number of options. She lived in a very small Eastern Idaho town, so they eventually moved closer to the facility.

Senator Bunderson asked what information did ISDB give them about cochlear implants and support.

Ruth Ann shared that ISDB had speech therapists, etc. They also provided hearing aids. Cochlear implants are very expensive, so they decided on the alternative total communication program offered by ISDB.

Ms. Diaz had basically the same response. Her parents learned sign language and she did go to speech therapy throughout all of elementary school.

Christine Ivie asked the students what they would like to see for the future.

Ruth Ann mentioned that sometimes small towns limit the options for classes, activities, etc.

Senator Bunderson asked the students if things had been different and it was affordable, would they have chosen cochlear implants.

Ruth Ann responded “probably not.” She grew up with sign. She also suggested students need good role models, and even with cochlear implants, sign should be taught. She believes students need opportunities to fit in.

Bunderson asked about the contrast in experiences via outreach vs. ISDB campus education.

None of the students had that experience, so could not respond.

Christine asked Jennifer about her experiences in a school district.

Jennifer said she had started in Meridian, but moved to Boise because Boise had more services. ISDB didn't seem to have any more opportunities for classes, etc., so she is glad she stayed in Boise.

Senator Bunderson said it sounded like each student was happy with their experiences.

Jennifer responded that she has not had the chance to experience the deaf culture and has never felt like she fit in with that culture. Sometimes she felt like she didn't fit in with her peers, but tried to work on that over time.

Christine asked the students if they could design for the future, what would you do – school in Gooding? Outreach programs? Other?

Ruth Ann suggested moving the school to a bigger location with more options.

Harvey Lyter made the point that when these young women were students, they probably did not have the access to cochlear implant technology that is available today. He also mentioned that Ruth Ann was one of ISDB's top students and that her Mom is their curriculum director.

Presentation - Parents:

Following the student panel, the Committee heard from two parents, Joann Grimmitt and Debbie Young.

Joann's main points were (1) split deaf and blind apart and educate in separate environments; (2) include blind students in regular education; and (3) make sure local district personnel are responsible to regional or state person to provide consistency and adequate resources for students throughout the state.

Joann described medical problems that led to her daughter's blindness. She also described her family values. ISDB provided care and home instruction that helped them plan instruction Outreach in preschool was excellent, but problems began in the school setting. Joann felt like she was being judged as a bad parent for not allowing her daughter to go to ISDB. Once a year her daughter was evaluated at ISDB. Each time she was evaluated, there would be a battle because the ISDB person would encourage her daughter to come to ISDB.

Joann fought to receive services for her daughter in the school district. The district assigned a paraprofessional who learned Braille as her daughter learned Braille. Her daughter did not receive services from someone trained to provide services to blind students. ISDB outreach service providers were the only ones who had experience. ISDB would make recommendations to the district, but often the district did not have the money to meet those recommendations. This was very frustrating for her daughter, and eventually she became hurt and angry and tried to commit suicide.

Joann's daughter never had text books, etc. before December and often Braille machines and other assistive technology would break. Mainstream classes were not always prepared and sent her to the Resource Room, even when it wasn't appropriate.

She finally did go to ISDB because she thought that would be better, that ISDB would be more prepared. Her first semester was for evaluation. During the second semester, some classes were cancelled and other campus classes were focused on deaf students. Teachers were not always aware of ISDB library services for the blind. She would miss a lot of discussion because sometimes interpreters would only interpret what the teacher said, not discussion from other students.

Her daughter went back to public school, and was sent to the Resource Room. She finally dropped out and wants to finish her GED, but that is difficult because of mental health issues.

Joann stated that ISDB has a lot to offer and has given her daughter help in many areas, but there's a need for change. It's difficult to send a child away from home to live. Blind and deaf education should be separated.

Harvey asked Joann how old her daughter is and is she receiving any vocational rehabilitation services?

Joann said her daughter is 18. She is receiving services from the Idaho Commission for the Blind. The Commission has provided services and is helping her with her goals. Her daughter has backed off because of the level of pressure.

The next parent to speak was Debbie Young, from Payette. She has 3 blind children.

The oldest child is well adjusted. He has had a variety of experiences because they were in the military and had a lot of services. Other states have more people and more funding, so more services. He was in Nampa with a Braille teacher and did well. Then he had an ISDB consultant when they moved to Payette. There was no academic progress for 2 years because there was no teacher, just an aide who monitored him. In the 4th grade, with a Braille teacher, he made progress and can read Braille very well. He does not have any computer skills, but otherwise does extremely well.

Two years ago, the Braille teacher left, so Debbie's 2 daughters have struggled. She has had problems getting assistive technology and appropriate services both from the district and from ISDB outreach. She has also had problems with technology breaking down and then not having access to services.

The district did not have access to Braille books for her children to read. Her daughter often has nothing to do, and sits with her head on her desk. Debbie does not want to send her daughter to ISDB because she wants to keep the family together.

Debbie's children have shown no growth on the ISAT. IEP meetings are very difficult for both the students and parents. It's very discouraging. Her 1st and 9th grade daughters show no progress on IEP goals.

Senator Bunderson asked if these references were to district employees or ISDB employees.

Debbie responded that it was the district. She has never seen the ISDB person, and ISDB materials were not available during the summer.

Senator Bunderson made the point that districts are autonomous and districts can accept or not accept help from ISDB.

Joann commented that the ISDB person has a big area to cover and it is difficult to offer enough help. Often ISDB services are only consulting with the district employees, not directly serving students. She also said that her daughter felt like ISDB classes were 'dumbed down.'

Debbie has contacted the State Department of Education, but feels like that is then reported to the district and her daughter gets in trouble or is ridiculed.

Debbie wanted to take the Braille class (to help her daughter) but was told she couldn't because she doesn't have a 2 year degree and the class is for paraprofessionals. Karen McGee asked that this be noted and looked into.

Debbie really agrees that ISDB should separate the deaf and blind services because some students feel the blind are discriminated against.

Senator Bunderson asked that the Committee examine possible services for parents provided by ISDB as well as programs for students.

Karen asked Harvey if they have parent classes at ISDB.

Harvey replied that they do now, but it is new.

Joann suggested that problems with assistive technology must also be addressed. Technology malfunctions lead to academic problems.

Presentation – Commission for Blind and Visually Impaired:

Angela Roan, Director of the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, addressed the Committee. She said she has seen many improvements at ISDB since Harvey has been there. Most people go blind or visually impaired later in life, very few are blind at birth or as children.

The Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired provides O & M (Orientation and Mobility) services for children as well as adults. Many blind or visually impaired people want to use the vision they have and adapt vs. using a cane or seeing eye dogs. The Commission offers many classes and training programs.

Senator Bunderson asked if these training programs are offered at ISDB.

Angela indicated that ISDB is more academically driven.

Harvey said they have an industrial arts program, but not as in depth as the school districts' programs.

Senator Bunderson remarked that it seems like if a student waits for a career path and this training until they are 21, we are missing something and are not meeting their needs.

Harvey agreed, but would argue that most districts do not have really advanced professional technical programs.

Senator Bunderson said he was not trying to make that comparison, but was making a comparison between the Commission services and ISDB. He believes students need to start thinking about a career path by the end of elementary school. We need to figure out how we will provide curriculum and programs that 'lift' people.

Karen agreed and added that she believes instilling confidence is critical, even in preschool.

Angela said they do not teach that it is a 'culture,' because in the workforce there is not a 'culture.' People have to succeed and be independent in work and life. The Commission has summer work experience programs. They are usually 8 week programs. Students work in various jobs in the Treasure Valley.

Angela sent an e-mail asking for her staff's responses. The following were received: 11-15 blind vs. 200 deaf – only so many resources. The blind use auditory for everything; deaf use visual for everything. The city of Gooding does not have stoplights, public transportation, etc. The Commission does not want to create a culture; they want to be mainstreamed in Boise.

Angela suggested that ISDB students are severely lacking in daily living skills compared with district students. Social skills are also lacking in ISDB students compared to district students.

She also commented that Braille equipment can be very expensive for the districts.

The Commission also offers low vision clinics and partnering with ISDB.

Angela's recommendations for ISDB are that blind students be served in a better location, making the same academic progress by learning Braille.

Senator Bunderson noted that Angela alluded to separating deaf and blind – and asked what would be the benefits.

Angela said she believes you will get better teachers if you separate the two.

Senator Bunderson said there is compelling information that the location is not great. Also, there is compelling information that we should separate education for the deaf and hard of hearing and education for the blind and visually impaired.

Presentation – Student:

Jolyn Page was a student at ISDB. She went to public school most of her life until the 9th grade. Public school was a better experience. She had learned Braille. When she arrived at ISDB, she was told she had some vision, so she could not use Braille.

Classes were very easy and boring; it was more challenging in the public school. She had some mobility at the state school, but it was very limited. She also learned minimal technology. She has learned more at the Commission. She was on the basketball team, but found it hard to communicate with the deaf students. It was a better experience at the public school; there were more funds and she was not expected to just hang out with people with the same disability.

Karen asked Jolyn what she thinks would be ideal for the future of ISDB.

Jolyn responded that she thinks a bigger city would be better. It's hard to have classes with a deaf teacher and deaf students because the interpreters did not interpret all discussions. She does think it would be better to separate deaf and blind education.

Senator Bunderson commented that he was very impressed with how articulate Jolyn is, and that she is obviously extremely bright. He asked what tools she uses to do her job.

Jolyn uses a laptop with voice, Braille (she even reads novels), and travel skills/mobility (using cane). She would like to have had all of this earlier. She had some in elementary school (public), but in high school was told that since she had some sight, she didn't need those things.

Senator Bunderson commented that sounded like a disability of the people working with her.

Presentation – Co-Ad Disability Rights Advocate:

Suzie Hanks discussed the protection and advocacy system for Idaho (federally funded). Co-Ad offers a wide variety of services from information and referral to representation in court. The level of service is determined by the organization's priorities for that year.

Co-Ad receives calls from parents and students who receive ISDB services in a variety of ways. They did review ISDB students' IEPs and noted violations that they felt were signs of a systemic problem. Some examples were:

- identical goals, objectives and progress reports for same students over years and for different students – even misspelled word or one student's name on another's IEP.
- students with multiple disabilities who did not have goals related to deafness or blindness.
- objectives written "students will succeed . . . 2 out of 5," then "3out of 5," then "4 out of 5."

Co-Ad is mandated to try to resolve issues in the least adversarial way, so they shared their concerns with the State Department of Education monitoring team. They requested a plan for improving results. It is a public document. Suzie will leave a copy for distribution to the Committee.

Co-Ad is proposing a goal to their board of monitoring ISDB. Their plan for improving results for this upcoming year include 1) reviewing results of the State department of Education's monitoring report, 2) attending IEP meetings, 3) monitoring ISDB's progress in the improvement plan, and 4) pursuing legal remedies.

Suzie shared that Co-Ad receives calls as well for information and referral. Some examples (note – these are parent perceptions):

- IEP called for sign and spoken instruction and no accommodations were made due to instructor's philosophic belief in sign only.
- Student with multiple disabilities was not receiving evaluations in all areas of instruction or functioning.
- Students caught in disputes between districts and ISDB.
- Sometimes districts refer students to ISDB because they don't have services, but the district may be the LRE for the child.
- To answer questions such as - Who oversees dorm life? Who teaches daily living skills? What standards exist for dorm life?

When Co-Ad contacted the state agency, they could not get answers regarding accreditation, inspections, etc. Suzie made the point that usually she could get answers from the statute, rules, etc. With ISDB, this is not the case. She did say, though, that in the past year some policies are being posted on the web.

Another big issue, according to Suzie, is that there may be students at ISDB who qualify for developmental disability services. If eligible for Intermediate Care Facility for the Mentally Retarded (ICFMR), they would be overseen by a licensed person.

Suzie is also the parent of a 20 year old student who is blind. Her daughter received services through ISDB and Boise School District. Her daughter had very good experiences in summer and winter camps at ISDB. She never had a desire, though, to attend ISDB, and her friends recommended not going to ISDB.

Senator Bunderson asked who determines the qualifications for ICFMR.

Suzie said that determination comes through Health and Welfare. She's not sure who contacts H & W; maybe family, maybe school.

Suzie's recommendation for the Committee: transparency.

Senator Bunderson asked if there are many options for people with disabilities. Is there any opportunity to alter our funding sources to better meet the students' needs?

Suzie said that Co-Ad is happy to play some type of collaborative role with the Committee if they would like Co-Ad to.

Presentation – Ramona Walhof and Paula Achter:

Paula is the new president for Idaho NFB (National Federation for the Blind). She grew up in Pullman, Washington. She is partially sighted, and believes a lot of her ability is based on attitude. Her parents did not have an "attitude" of blindness. Confidence also makes life easier. She was in her 30's when she came to the Commission in Idaho. Their focus was different at that time.

She believes mainstreaming is a good thing. She has been a para-professional in Caldwell. The principal knew she had living skills, Braille skills, and cane skills, so she could help students. But she was not allowed to give input in IEP meetings. Every disability has unique needs that have to be met in different ways. There are a lot of life and social skills that need to be taught.

Senator Bunderson asked why it takes so long to get materials.

Harvey answered that they have to wait until districts identify the materials and get the information to ISDB.

Mary Bostick said the IDEA's (Individuals with Disabilities Act) new National Instructional Materials Center will help provide materials and improve access.

Paula expressed that she believes separating deaf and blind programs is a good idea. Blind people can be perfectly independent and integrated into society. They need interaction with peers and opportunities for independence. Paula described the NFB, their funding, etc.

Ramona Walhof said that blind children need help in 5 areas: 1) Braille reading and writing, 2) independent travel, 3) computer access, 4) self-image and social skills, and 5) integration into classroom, including support for teachers.

She continued, saying that those are the special things that need to be provided by ISDB or school districts. This is happening a little bit, but not enough because there are not trained people. This would be more likely to happen if programs were separated and the blind moved to Boise. Blind students are not getting what they need at ISDB because ISDB is focused on deaf education.

Ramona would also like there to be a requirement that services be coordinated between districts. She suggested regional consortiums, and said that maybe Michael Graham could report, using Texas and Iowa as examples. Ramona suggests a Boise campus for blind students, especially helping to prepare blind students for college.

Senator Bunderson would like this Committee to send a letter to the chairs of JLOC requesting that they also review the possibility of separating deaf and blind programs as well as examining the locations of current programs.

Presentation – Idaho Council for Deaf and Hard of Hearing:

Wes Maynard described their council and its efforts in the newborn screening program. Results are sent to ISDB, the physician, the infant-toddler program and the council. Many do not seek services or get follow-up screenings. The council is increasingly involved in K-12 issues. Out of 114 districts, only 7 have a staff audiologist. There are 2 ½ times as many hard of hearing kids in districts with audiologists. That could be a problem of under-identification.

Senator Bunderson suggested we should consider requiring schools to provide all students with hearing and vision screenings.

Goal 1. ISDB, ISU, SDE and ICDHH soliciting funds to provide audiologist services to districts with low IRI scores – pilot program. Would like to consider even providing traveling audiologists (example: Utah system) for outlying districts).

Goal 2. Interpreters trying to meet needs of all students – ASL, English, etc. Wes described history of ASL, English and hybrid.

Cyndi Hippler said when her son learned, he learned signed English, but many of his peers use ASL.

Senator Bunderson asked, should we be teaching all of them?

Wes did not think we should limit ourselves to one language. He discussed various issues: interpreters, acoustics of rooms, and one on one vs. group.

According to Wes, the State Department of Education paid for all interpreters in Idaho to take an exam. Level 3 – 4 means 50-59% of information communication. Results: 58% of K-12 interpreters scored 3.0 or higher; 41% scored below 3.0. This means that 62% of Idaho K-12 interpreters are unable to interpret 60% of classroom information. This is due to lack of training, funding, and inservice focused on other things than interpreting.

The council is working closely with ISDB, ISU, SDE, the Idaho Association of School Administrators, Interpreters Organization, etc. to try to establish minimum standards for interpreters in Idaho schools. They are pursuing legislation.

Senator Bunderson asked what should be the vision for Idaho. Should we be focused on interpreting or on using technology to mainstream people?

One size does not fit all. One problem is the lack of resources even after cochlear implant. Another problem is that cochlear implant children may struggle if they are not taught any other communication skills.

Wes believes that the most successful people are people who take advantage of all of the options available to them. He wants the Committee to take a whole child approach.

Senator Bunderson said he read statistics that sign language students usually reach educational level of 4th grade vs. cochlear implant students who are mainstreamed and at grade level in K-12. He asked Wes to tell the Committee what he would do if he were in charge; what would be his solution.

Wes said that, speaking for himself, he would move the school to the Treasure Valley, increase resources for students with cochlear implants and hearing aids, and increase skills of interpreters. In his observation, the most well adjusted students/people are those with good speech skills and sign language skills.

Harvey compared ISDB students to LEP students, in how we want them to progress in both languages. The bottom line is total communication.

Wes expressed 4 requests for the Committee: 1) increase number of audiologists in K-12, 2) increase aural/auditory resources for cochlear implant students, 3) increase funds for training educational interpreters in K-12, and 4) take a whole child approach.

Senator Bunderson asked Wes how the council envisions moving ISDB to the Treasure Valley or to change regional programs throughout the state. How would the transition look and what would the program look like? He would like a letter from Wes describing their vision.

Harvey suggested that we solicit the same type of letter from Angela Roan.

Presentation – Parent of child with cochlear implant:

Rick Stott is the parent of a child who had a cochlear implant at the age of 4 in Salt Lake City. She was one of the first students in Idaho. The parents researched what made deaf people successful. Rick agrees with Wes – success depends on as many options for communication as possible. They also worked on reading skills.

The implant was dramatic. She had to learn everything about speech and about noise. Now his daughter is a 4.0 student and just finished the 8th grade. She was voted as an outstanding girl in her 8th grade class at Lake Hazel Junior High School. She signs and has a full time interpreter, but many people don't realize she's deaf.

Even though she can communicate, she will use interpreter services to succeed in college, etc. The family has spent \$50,000 out of their own pocket on speech therapy and \$20,000 on cochlear implant technology outside of insurance.

Harvey pointed out that success is the degree of intervention, rather than a communication medium.

Senator Bunderson made the point that these services could be provided to more students without increasing the cost.

Rick said they also tried to get Braille classes started, but the Braille teacher is overwhelmed with so many needs. Resources are not enough the way they currently are in the school districts.

Karen said we need to know if there are kids who don't have support and resources getting what they need and are we getting the most for our money.

Senator Bunderson commented that we really need materials in the hands of parents at the earliest age so they have choices.

Rick said they did not consider splitting up their family by sending their child away for 4-5 days a week. He believes the school should move. Gooding, Idaho cannot attract professionals. He believes resources need to be available throughout the state. To segregate any students for any reason and isolate them from society is a mistake. He believes students should stay in local school districts and that more resources should be provided to the districts.

Rick believes that Wes' proposal is not very expensive and that training interpreters is the most critical. This would have the biggest impact on students throughout the state.

Senator Bunderson asked Harvey what were the requirements for interpreters.

Harvey responded that those who choose to participate need national level certification. There is no Idaho requirement.

Senator Bunderson would like the Committee to consider this.

Wes said the Council is pursuing legislation.

Senator Bunderson remarked that if the budget is 7 million dollars and we do not have the school, but provided services, personnel and standards, we could probably do what Rick and Wes are proposing – just change from the existing, expensive structure to focusing on providing resources to students. He suggested that Gooding should be one of the places where services would be located, so Gooding people would not lose out.

Rick asked that this is not made a hearing vs. deaf issue.

Presentation – Parent of deaf child:

Holly Thomas Mowery has a 3 ½ year old son who is deaf. She is happy the Committee is looking at the school. Her son is using hearing aids and FM system. He uses ASL and English sign language. He also has good speech. He prefers people sign to him, but prefers to speak back to them.

Holly is happy that this is not a battle between sign and speech. She believes the lack of academic skills for many adults is because of lack of services and neglect - not by parents, but within the educational system. People she sees who are most successful focus on good education, not on speech or sign. She would like the Committee to focus on "educational" needs. She wants them to make sure teachers and interpreters are highly qualified. She would like standards for interpreters to be established.

Senator Bunderson responded that he would also like to make sure that speech services are adequate. He would like programs to provide highly qualified teachers and pay them adequate salaries.

Presentation – Parent of deaf child:

Joe and Alex Lundgren are the parents of a student who is deaf. They do not believe the quality of education should be impacted by the choice of the communication method; that should be the choice of the family and the student.

The IDEA requires FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education) for students. Schools provide academic support, instruction, resources, information, etc. IDEA doesn't require schools to be responsible for medical services and services based on parents' choices. Alex would like schools to focus on educational issues. She shared the example of an interpreter that could not interpret and was not properly trained.

Alex would like a higher standard of professionalism. She misses the support from ISDB now that her son is enrolled in regular public school. Alex left a copy of her statement for the Committee members.

Senator Bunderson would like to examine possible mechanisms for parents to get certified and become paraprofessional assisting students.

Holly said she believes that would work as long as the parent wasn't working with his/her own child.

Joe brought up the isolation factor and lack of peers and role models in remote areas. This is something to consider when thinking about de-centralization.

Senator Bunderson addressed Joe, so you're not opposed to de-centralization as long as it is not extreme?

Joe shared some of his son's experiences and talked about the deaf culture. He believes in total communication, but also believes you need to help students understand the history of the deaf culture, the history of sign language, have role models, etc.

Joe's program recommendations include 1) that sign language and deaf culture be taught and 2) that there be parent support. He made the point that many families may have two incomes and still not have resources for supporting the child (hearing aids, speech, etc.) We also need to address children who are deaf and speak Spanish or another language. 3) There should be better interaction between ISDB and local school districts.

Senator Bunderson asked if there were standards that we can look at or develop.

Christine shared an example of Colorado's standards. We can provide a copy to each Committee member.

Christine said that ISDB currently has an interagency agreement that has to be revised by December 1 because of the reauthorization of IDEA. This may be the opportunity to look at this agreement.

Harvey shared that ISDB has agreements with a number of agencies. We may need to look at all of these.

Senator Bunderson asked if we need a constitutional amendment to look at some of the changes.

Joe said ISDB does not have an elected board because it is a state agency. There is no one to go to if one is unhappy with ISDB.

Joe recommends that the Committee continue a neutral approach, not preferring one over another (deaf vs. blind); services need to be provided for all.

Holly recommends day programs in different regions centralized in each region.

Senator Bunderson believes regional programs would be attractive to legislators.

Presentation – deaf professional:

Sonny Cabbage was born into a deaf family. His parents and all siblings are deaf. Some of them work at ISDB and some at a school for the deaf in New Mexico. Sonny attended ISDB and in the 8th grade went to Gooding for a class, but there was no interpreter, so he went back to ISDB. In high school Sonny took classes at ISDB and Gooding High School with an interpreter. He had to enter Gooding High School fulltime in the 12th grade to participate in sports. (That rule has since changed.)

Sonny was very involved in sports and was in the National Honor Society. He graduated and went to Gaulladet, where he got his business degree and was in honors English. He returned to Idaho and worked for the State Insurance Fund, then at ISDB. He is now employed by Idaho Power.

Sonny believes ISDB should exist as it is, but possibly be moved to Boise. (He said that after an earthquake, there was a debate about moving to Boise.) After living in Boise, he feels there may be more educational opportunities in Boise.

He said that 10% of deaf children are born to deaf parents, 90 % born to hearing parents. Children of deaf parents generally have better language skills because they are exposed to language immediately. The state school provides that language exposure and an environment filled with sign language. Deaf kids need peers they can interact with and need to be exposed to all levels of society rather than be isolated. He understands the difficulty of sending kids off to a school. If the school were in Boise, more deaf students and families could be located here.

It would be great if kids could stay at ISDB K-12 and graduate from there. The state school can provide more social development, confidence, and opportunities -- for sports, as an example. It became less intimidating for Sonny to interact with hearing peers when participating in sports.

When he was a student, and when he was staff, he saw some students who did not want to go home because parents would not learn sign and so they could not communicate.

Moving to Boise would also help with recruiting staff. In Boise, ISDB could provide more opportunities, and attract more students and families.

Sonny has visited other countries and (in response to the questions) said, yes, other countries do have different sign language.

Senator Bunderson asked Sonny about his participation in sports.

Sonny replied that he and another student transferred in order to participate in sports. The brother of one student, and another student who had a deaf parent, could both sign and interpret for him. He felt very fortunate.

Senator Bunderson asked if he knew that before he transferred to Gooding.

Sonny replied that he would have transferred regardless, but was very fortunate to have people who could interpret.

Karen thanked all of the presenters for their participation.

Wes asked about the Committee providing 3 models.

Senator Bunderson said we need to prioritize and make recommendations.

Christine read a letter from the Deaf Connection.

For future meetings, Senator Bunderson requested that we don't forget a presentation on technology – current and future. He asked, what is the greater good. What will be the best for the most people, rather than look at individual circumstances.

Harvey suggested a presentation from Holly Thomas – Mowery on communication technology.

The meeting was adjourned.

The next meeting of the ISDB Committee will be on Friday, September 16, in Boise, from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. in the Basement Conference Room of the J. R. Williams Office Building.

